

News to Digest

Health tips from your Gastroenterologist...



Digestive Health & Nutrition

Affiliated with the Three Rivers Endoscopy Center

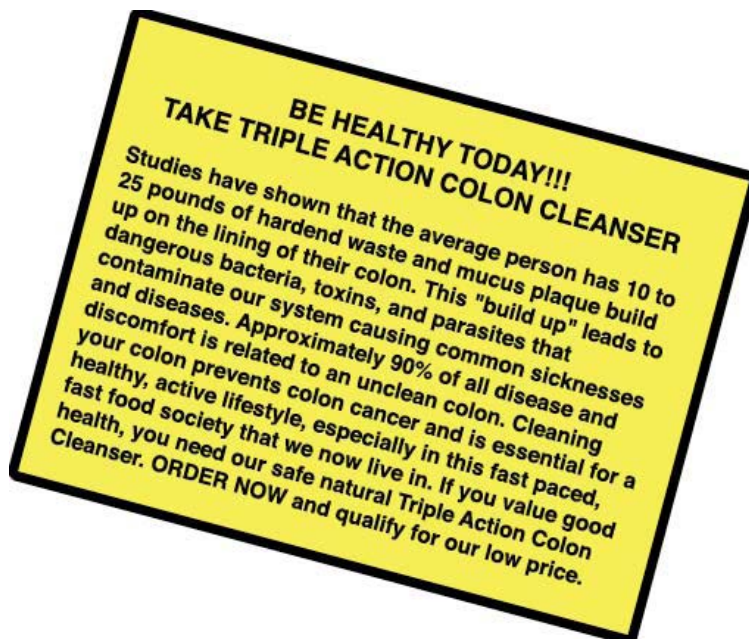
(412) 262-1000

www.gihealth.com

Say "No" to Colon Cleansers!

by Robert Fusco, MD

Have you seen ads like this one?



It would be nice if life was that simple, but you do NOT need to take colon cleansers. The same is true of colonic enema irrigations. Neither has any proven benefit and, in fact, may be harmful at times. Despite all the recent hype, there is not one true statement in the advertisement above. Let's take a look:

FALSE STATEMENT #1

The average person has 10-25 pounds of hardened waste and mucus plaque build up in their colon.

Sellers of colon cleansers or so-called "colonic" enemas often falsely state

that hardened feces accumulates for months (or even years) on the walls of the large intestine and block it from absorbing or eliminating properly. There is even an urban legend that John Wayne was found to have 40 pounds of built-up debris in his colon when he died. All of this is totally false, as anyone who undergoes a laxa-

tive preparation for colonoscopy will attest. After the expected few pounds of waste is expelled, the rest of the elimination is just the laxative solution, not the claimed 10 - 25 pounds of waste. Indeed, direct observation of the colon during surgical procedures or autopsies has never found evidence that hardened feces accumulate on the intestinal walls. However, these false claims persist and help sell more of these products.



Only the best for our patients...

We are pleased to announce that Three Rivers Endoscopy Center has recently upgraded to the new **Olympus EVIS EXERA III video endoscopy platform** for performing both upper endoscopy (EGD) and colonoscopy examinations.

Our physicians now have access to this state-of-the-art system with its enhanced HDTV image quality and added brightness for superior clarity enabling more detailed "scope" examinations.



Dr. Frank Kim with one of our new high definition Olympus colonoscopes.

FALSE STATEMENT #2

Bacteria, toxins and parasites in the colon contaminate our system causing common sicknesses and diseases.

The theory that a sluggish colon is a “toxic waste dump” that causes people to get sick was abandoned by the medical profession at least 70 years ago after scientific observations proved it wrong. The intestinal wall is a complex microecosystem of over 300 different species of bacteria and mucus that keep us healthy. There is no build up of toxins. It is true that intestinal parasites are widespread in some underdeveloped countries, but they have never been shown to be a common occurrence in the United States. Profit-seeking entrepreneurs have invented the idea of toxins because that gives them something to pretend they can fix in order to sell more products.

FALSE STATEMENT #3

Approximately 90% of all disease and discomfort is related to an unclean colon.

There is no reason to believe that waste within the colon causes any disease. Despite the exaggerated claims, none of these products will enhance digestion, improve the health of the hair, skin, and nails, “cleanse” vital organs, improve liver or kidney function, or increase the user’s energy. However, claims like these may sell more product.

FALSE STATEMENT #4

Cleansing your colon prevents colon cancer.

While colorectal cancer is a common and serious disease in this country, there is no scientific evidence that any laxative or colon cleansing regimen significantly decreases one’s personal risk of developing colorectal cancer. It’s just not true, but again that fear of cancer helps generate more sales.

FALSE STATEMENT #5

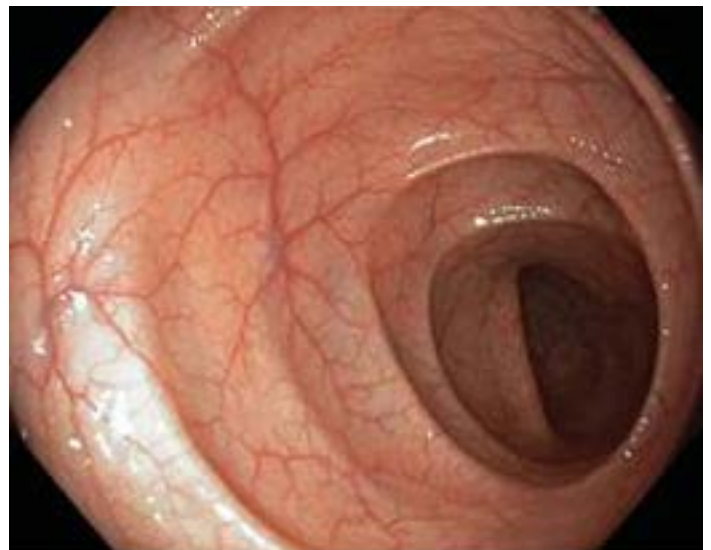
Our product is totally natural and without side effects.

Most adults believe that if something is called “natural,” then it is harmless and free of potential side effects. They also assume that some government agency tests all natural products to be sure that they are safe and effective. This is not true. In 1994, in response to a tremendous lobbying effort on the part of supplement manufacturers, Congress passed the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, which changed the

way the industry was regulated. Now vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other “natural” substances you see on the shelves are not tested, reviewed or approved by the FDA. This includes colon cleansers. Most individuals don’t realize that the regular use of such products can actually damage their colon. I see examples of this every month. The worst contain some form of *senna*.

Normal Colon Lining

This is a photo of a normal colon taken during a recent colonoscopy examination. Note the pink color and visible delicate blood vessels beneath the surface. These are all signs of a normal healthy colon lining. This is the way your colon is supposed to look.



Colon Damage from A Colon Cleanser

The second photo was taken during a recent colonoscopy in a 46 year old woman who was seen for a routine screening exam. She stated that she had been seeing a chiropractor who suggested that she begin a program of regular colon cleansing with an herbal product called CleanseMore. She assumed that this “natural” product would be safe. This product has caused considerable permanent damage to the lining of her colon which can be seen by the darkened areas.

Termed “**melanosis coli**” (**black colon**), this dark appearance is often seen in cases of chronic laxative abuse. She was advised to gradually taper off this product and add more fiber to her diet.



Summary

Remember, you don't have 25 pounds of encrusted waste lining your colon nor is there such a thing as toxin build-up in your colon. Regular use of colon cleansers - especially herbal remedies that contain senna - will not improve your general health or protect your digestive system from disease. If a so-called expert on the radio or infomercial concludes by asking you to purchase such a product, be very suspicious. His wallet is more likely to benefit from the transaction than your colon. Eat right with several servings of fresh fruits and vegetable every day, drink more fluids, and consume plenty of fiber. That is the best advice for a healthy colon. Nature will do the rest.

Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition

The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice in Moon Township, PA with six experienced gastroenterologists, two registered nurse practitioners, and staff that is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of digestive disorders.

Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977 with a combined medical staff clinical experience of over 200 years. We have cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems.

We fully understand the very sensitive nature of digestive illness and realize that each case is unique. Our objective is to consistently deliver high quality personal care in an efficient, private, and patient friendly environment. We are very proud of the care we provide our patients and would be honored to care for you and your family should any digestive issues arise.

For more information, give us a call at 412.262.1000 or access our website at www.gihealth.com.

If you still need a little help, here is [high fiber/stool softener mix](#) that is safe for long term use. It is not habit forming and contains no stimulant laxatives like senna that can damage the colon. I use it every day.

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Ernest Stanley, MD • Lisa Fadden, CRNP • James Pilla, DO • Robert Fusco, MD • Lester Stine, MD • Kathryn McParlane, CRNP • Richard Kim, MD • Frank Kim, MD